



MONGOLIA'S PEATLANDS UNDER PRESSURE

*Investing in healthy peatlands
is critical to tackling drought
and land degradation*



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MONGOLIA'S PEATLANDS

Vital for water security, livelihoods and climate resilience



Mongolia's peatland area is estimated at 27,000 km² - equivalent to around 1.7% of the country's territory (Wu et al., 2025; Minayeva et al., 2018; UNEP, 2022). Peatlands occur mainly in northern, central and north-eastern Mongolia, particularly in mountain and foothill landscapes, forest-steppe and taiga zones, and river valleys – often in close association with permafrost.

Despite their limited area, peatlands are vital natural infrastructure in Mongolia's dry continental climate. They retain and gradually release water; sustain rivers, springs, wells and groundwater; reduce erosion; protect permafrost; store carbon; and support biodiversity. Peatlands also provide some of Mongolia's most productive pastures, supporting herder livelihoods and livestock resilience during prolonged dry periods.

These functions directly support the UNCCD's goal of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by maintaining ecosystem services, land productivity and community resilience. Peatlands are therefore strategic assets for LDN, drought resilience, water security, productive rangelands, biodiversity conservation and climate action in Mongolia.

Peatlands under pressure

Mongolia's peatlands face overlapping pressures from rapid climate warming, permafrost degradation, overgrazing, mining, road and dam construction, fires and uncontrolled vehicle traffic. These pressures damage vegetation and hydrology, expose peat to drying, erosion and mineralisation, and reduce water retention, pasture productivity, biodiversity and carbon storage. Because many peatlands occur in dry landscapes and are closely associated with permafrost, disturbance can trigger a reinforcing cycle of peat loss, altered soil moisture and accelerated permafrost degradation (Minayeva et al., 2018; Yamkhin et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2025).

UNEP's 2022 Global Peatlands Assessment estimated that around 50% of Mongolia's peatlands were already drained. However, Mongolia still lacks a nationally consistent assessment of degradation rates and drivers (Wu et al., 2025). Peatland extent also remains uncertain: earlier estimates range from 15,500 km² to the most-widely accepted figure of 27,000 km², while a new cloud-based study mapped 18,936 km² of potential peatlands at 30m resolution (Liu et al., 2026). Further field validation is essential to prioritise restoration, track progress towards LDN, improve GHG reporting and guide public and private investment.



Progress on peatlands

Over the past decade, Mongolia has moved from limited recognition of peatlands towards stronger policy attention, knowledge and implementation. A major ADB-supported peatland project produced a national assessment, policy brief and draft Strategic Action Plan; its findings were incorporated into Mongolia's State of the Environment Report and discussed by Parliament (ADB, 2018).

Mongolia's NDC3.0 now recognises conservation and sustainable-use activities in peatland restoration areas (Government of Mongolia, 2025). Its first Climate Change Law, adopted on 3 July 2026, strengthens climate governance, GHG reporting and adaptation planning (UNDP, 2026). Although available summaries do not specifically mention peatlands, the law creates a stronger environment for financing land-based climate solutions, including peatland conservation and restoration. Several complementary initiatives are now underway, including a GEF-UNEP project, TNC's Peatland Monitoring and Protection project in Tsagaan-Uul, and a joint project by Wetlands International, WSCC and CfE. But much more needs to be done.

Wetlands International's track record of peatland action in Mongolia

Since the early 2000s, Wetlands International and its partners, the Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia (WSCC) and Care for Ecosystems (CfE), have progressively advanced peatland inventory, policy development and landscape

restoration in Mongolia. Key milestones include:

- Building of Extensive regional expertise: together, the partners have more than 20 years of practical experience in peatland restoration in Mongolia;
- Inventory of Mongolia's peatlands for their conservation and wise use (2002-2003 – funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Global Peatlands Initiative); Wetlands International and its partners produced Mongolia's preliminary peatland inventory data;
- Strategic Planning for Peatlands (2017-2018 – funded by the Asian Development Bank); Wetlands International and its partners updated peatland inventory data, assessed peatland losses and their root causes, and developed policy recommendations; and
- Peatland restoration project (2024-2028, funded by Greenchoice): Building on the ADB project and a detailed Project Plan Proposal developed in 2023, the partners launched one of Mongolia's first large-scale pilots applying a comprehensive landscape approach to peatland restoration and conservation. It is expected to improve the health of more than 20,000 hectares across four provinces and reduce GHG emissions by at least 1 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent

Call to action

Mongolia has a strong foundation to scale up peatland action and demonstrate leadership by recognising peatlands as natural infrastructure for Land Degradation Neutrality. There has been significant progress in recent years but there is still an urgent need to accelerate peatland action. In particular, coordinated action can transform successful pilots into a national programme protecting water, pastures, biodiversity and climate resilience.

Wetlands International, WSCC and CfE call on

- The Government to integrate peatlands into national land, water and climate policies and engage with the Peatland Breakthrough;
- Mongolian companies to invest in peatland conservation and restoration;
- International donors and investors to finance inventories, restoration and community-led management; and
- Technical and research partners to strengthen mapping, monitoring and knowledge exchange.



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